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ABSTRACT

This investigation addressed the extent to which persons with disabilities separated from their jobs because of type of placement model, type of job, and job tenure. Level of disability was also studied as a factor. A total of 380 supported employees (ages 16-66) who separated from 411 jobs served as subjects. Results suggest that health- and economic-related reasons contributed to more job separations among persons with moderate, severe, or profound mental retardation and psychiatric disabilities, while lack of job responsibility and social-vocational behavior were reasons reported most often for persons with mild mental retardation. There were no significant differences among the three types of placements (individual, group, and mobile crew) and reasons for job separation. Among employees in janitorial/maintenance and food service occupations, poor production was the primary reason for job separation. Among supported employees in light-industrial positions, health was the major reason. Persons with mild mental retardation experienced significantly more positive changes in job status than persons with moderate to profound mental retardation or persons with psychiatric disabilities. Persons in individual placements experienced more positive job changes than persons in other placements, and persons in janitorial/maintenance positions or food service positions had more positive changes than persons in light industrial jobs. (15 references) (JDD)

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An Analysis of the Reasons for Job Separations in Relation to Disability, Placement, Job Type, and Length of Employment

Thomas R. Lagomarcino and Frank R. Rusch

Greenspan and Shoultz (1981) introduced a conceptual framework for analyzing the reasons why persons with disabilities separate from their jobs. This framework identified three categories of social factors (temperament, character, and social awareness), two categories of production factors (quantity and quality of work), and health factors. Their study, which reported on the primary reasons for involuntary termination from competitive employment for 30 individuals with mild to moderate mental retardation, found that social incompetence was at least as important a cause of job failure as poor production. Two additional job separation studies utilized the same conceptual framework in their analyses. Hanley-Maxwell, Rusch, Chadsey-Rusch, and Renzaglia (1986) reported similar findings in their investigation of factors contributing to the job terminations of 51 adults with disabilities. Martin, Rusch, Lagomarcino, and Chadsey-Rusch (1986) extended these earlier studies by comparing the terminations of food service employees with and without mental retardation. They found no significant differences between the two groups, with social and production problems contributing almost equally to job terminations for both groups.

Hill, Wehman, Hill, and Goodall (1986) examined 107 reasons given for job separation of persons with mental retardation. In contrast to previous studies, they examined the primary reasons for job separation according to employee-related and externally related attributions. The results indicated that persons with higher IQ scores (in the mid 50s) tended to be "actors" who frequently caused their own job separations because of skill or behavioral deficits. In addition, this group experienced significantly more separations resulting from behaviors related to poor work attitudes (e.g., poor attendance, not wanting

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to work), in contrast to persons with lower IQ scores (in the mid 40s), who separated from their jobs primarily because of external factors, including the economic situation of the employer and parental interference.

Most recently, Hanley-Maxwell (1989) studied the relationship between length of time on the job and reasons for job terminations. Results indicated that although there was no relationship between reasons given and length of time on the job, participants lost their jobs most often within the first year of employment. Hanley-Maxwell (1989) questioned the quality of long-term, follow-up services and suggested that these services needed to remain in place well after the initial training period (typically, from two weeks to two months).

This investigation sought to extend existing research by addressing the extent to which persons with disabilities separated from their jobs because of type of placement model (e.g., individual versus group), type of job (e.g., janitorial/maintenance versus food services), and job tenure. We also studied level of disability as a factor in relation to placement model, job type, and tenure. Unique to our investigation was our attempt to determine if there were any significant differences among these same variables (i.e., type of placement type of job, and job tenure) and positive changes in job status.

Method

Subjects and Settings

The subject pool consisted of individuals who were placed into supported employment and separated from their jobs between February 1, 1986 and June 30, 1989. A total of 380 supported employees were identified as separating from 411 jobs. The supported employees ranged in age from 16 to 66 years of age, with an average age of 31 years. The majority of the supported employees had mental retardation as their primary disability (n = 247). The average IQ score of these individuals was 62 (range = 17 to 75). The remaining supported employees were persons with psychiatric disabilities (n = 68) or physical or sensory impairments (n = 65). Table 1 overviews the demographic and employment setting characteristics of the sample.

Table 1

Demographics and Employment Setting Characteristics of Persons Separated from Supported Employment (N = 380)

Average age	32
Average IQ score	62
Disability categories	
Mild mental retardation (IQ = 55-75)	166
Moderate mental retardation (IQ = 40-54)	56
Severe/profound mental retardation (IQ = 0-39)	25
Psychiatric disabilities	68
Other	65
Gender	
Male	247
Female	132
Previous placement	
Sheltered employment	121
Work activity	72
Work adjustment training	60
School	30
Competitive employment/supported employment	44
Other	53
Average job tenure (months)	8
Placement type	
Individual	193
Cluster or group placement	202
Mobile crew	16
Job type	
Janitorial/maintenance	141
Food service	101
Light industrial	97
Other	72

Sixty-seven percent (n = 253) of the supported employees had previously been served in day programs funded by state social service agencies, with the majority referred from sheltered workshops (n = 121) before their placement in supported employment.

The sample included 202 persons who were individually placed, 193 placed in clustered or group placements, and 16 who worked as part of a mobile crew. The placements covered a variety of occupational areas including janitorial positions (n = 141), food service (n = 101), light industrial (n = 97), and other (n = 72). The majority of the jobs in the "other" category consisted of clerical, health care, or laundry positions. The average length of employment was 8 months (range = 1 to 26 months).

Data for this investigation were obtained from the Illinois Data Management and Information System (Ellis, Rusch, Tu, & McCaughrin, 1990). This information system is maintained by the Illinois Supported Employment Project, which is located at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The Illinois Supported Employment Project provides on-site technical assistance to model programs throughout the state of Illinois. Further, these model programs submit data to the University of Illinois on a regular basis.

Data Collection Procedures

In establishing the information system, several steps were taken to ensure accuracy and timeliness in reporting data. First, instructions accompanied each form requesting that the form be completed by the employment specialist primarily responsible for providing post-placement, long-term follow-up. Second, all employment specialists attended a total of three two-day workshops in which they were trained to collect data. Third, all employment specialists were provided with at least two on-site visits which included technical assistance in data collection and program evaluation by staff members of the University of Illinois. Two data sources were utilized for this study: supported employee characteristics and job separation.

Supported employee characteristics (Worker Characteristics Form). The Worker Characteristics Form is completed for each individual who enters a supported employment

program. The form requests demographic and assessment information as well as information about living arrangements, previous employment, current employment, hours employed, type of placement, method of transportation, and previous education.

Job separation. When a change in employment occurs, a Job Separation Form is completed. Twenty-seven reasons for job separation were identified based on descriptors used in previous job separation studies (Greenspan & Shoultz, 1981; Hanley-Maxwell et al., 1986; Hill et al., 1986). The person completing the form was instructed to identify the primary reason for job separation based on their knowledge of the supported employee and the job site. Because of the specialist's affiliation with the employee, the specialist also was allowed access to information typically filed by the employer to substantiate the dismissal or reason for separation. The form also required the employment specialist to indicate: (a) the date that the job separation occurred, (b) the type of job, and (c) a brief description of what happened to the individual after the job separation.

Reliability

Sixty-two job separations (15%) were randomly selected from the sample for purposes of collecting reliability data. A letter was sent to each of the supported employment programs that had provided follow-up services to the individuals in the subsample. A second Job Separation Form was sent to the program coordinators of the respective programs; this form included the worker number, place of employment, date of job separation, and the name of the person completing the first form. A cover letter instructed the program coordinator to identify a second individual (e.g., employment specialist, program coordinator) familiar with the job separation and to have this second person indicate the primary reason for job separation on the enclosed form. If a second person was not familiar with the case, the original employment specialist was asked to complete the form. Persons completing the form were instructed to do so without referring to the original job separation form; however, they were allowed to review employment specialist notes that described the work

situation which may have led to the specific job separation. Each letter was followed by a telephone call to answer any questions about the instructions.

Fifty-four of the 62 reliability job separation forms were completed, reflecting 13% of the total job separation sample. A reliability coefficient of .89 was obtained for reasons given, which was calculated by dividing the number of agreements (n = 48) by the total number of agreements plus disagreements.

Job Separation Categories

For analysis, the 27 reasons listed on the Job Separation Form were divided into seven major categories: (a) lack of job responsibility, (b) task production, (c) social-vocational behavior, (d) economy, (e) health, (f) change in job status, and (g) other external factors (Lagomarcino, 1990). Lack of job responsibility referred to employees who had poor attendance, poor work attitudes, or lacked motivation to work. Task production referred to employees who worked too slowly, required continual prompting to complete job assignments, or whose work quality was poor. Social-vocational behavior included insubordinate behavior, maladaptive behavior, and poor social skills. Economy referred to separations resulting from adverse economic conditions that affect employees both with and without disabilities. Medical/health referred to physical problems that restricted work activity and to hospitalizations that resulted from the recurrence of symptoms related to specific psychiatric disabilities. Change of job status referred to a positive change in the employment status of the employee (e.g., took a better job, no longer needed support services). Other external factors referred to job separations that may have occurred because of something beyond the direct control of the employee (e.g., parents did not support the employment, employee moved away, financial aid was threatened). Table 2 provides a complete listing by category of the reasons for job separation.

Data Analysis

Two-way chi-square analysis procedures were used to determine if there were significant differences in the reasons stated for job separations among disability groups, types of

Table 2

Primary Reasons for Job Separation by Category

Lack of Job Responsibility	
	Does not want to work
	Poor attendance/tardy
	Poor work attitude
	Criminal behavior
Task Production	
	Low quality work
	Work rate too slow
	Continual prompting required
Social-Vocational Behavior	
	Poor social skills
	Insubordinate behavior
	Poor appearance
	Maladaptive behavior
Economy	
	Economic situation of employer
	Seasonal layoff
Health	
	Medical restriction
	Rehospitalization
Other External Factors	
	Transportation
	Parent/guardian initiated
	Financial aid threatened
	Moved away
	Program terminated
	Retired

placements, types of jobs, and job tenure. In addition, one-way chi-square analysis procedures were used to determine if there were any significant differences among these same variables and positive changes in job status.

Results

The results of this study are reported in two sections. The first section reports on those reasons given for negative job separations. The second section reported the results of job separations that typically resulted in an improvement in the employee's working situation.

Reasons for Negative Job Separation

Disability group. Because of the small number of individuals represented by other disability groups, chi-square analysis procedures were used to examine only three major disability groups: (a) mild mental retardation, (b) moderate, severe, or profound mental retardation, and (c) psychiatric disabilities. The results were significant, X^2 (10, n = 278) = 27.30, $P \leq .01$.

Health-related reasons contributed to more job separations of persons with psychiatric disabilities and persons with moderate to profound mental retardation than any other reason. Lack of job responsibility and social-vocational behavior were the primary reasons reported for job separation among persons with mild retardation but also were major contributing factors for persons with psychiatric disabilities. Results also indicated that economic layoffs affected persons with moderate to profound mental retardation and persons with psychiatric disabilities more than persons with mild mental retardation.

Type of placement. There were no significant differences between the three types of placements (i.e., individual, group, mobile crew) and reasons for job separation.

Type of job. Results indicated significant differences in reasons for job separation among light industrial, janitorial/maintenance, food service, and other occupational areas, X^2 (15, n = 332) - 26.44, $P \leq .05$. Poor production was the primary reason for job separation among employees in janitorial/maintenance and food service occupations and was also a contributing factor for those in light-industrial jobs. However, health was the major reason

for job separation among supported employees in light-industrial positions. In addition, light industrial employees were affected more by economic layoffs than any other occupational area.

Job tenure. Results of the chi-square analysis indicated significant differences in reasons for job separation for those employed for up to six months as compared to those employees who were employed for seven months or more, X^2 (15, n = 319) = 27.53, $P \leq .05$. Although production and economy were cited as the primary reasons for job separation for both groups, lack of job responsibility and social-vocational behavior problems were experienced more by individuals employed for seven months or longer.

Positive Reasons for Job Separations

Disability group. The results of a one-way chi-square analysis indicated that persons with mild mental retardation experienced significantly more positive changes in job status than persons with moderate to profound mental retardation (19.61, $P \leq .0001$) or persons with psychiatric disabilities (10.29, $P \leq .0001$).

Types of placement. The results of a one-way chi-square analysis indicated that there were significant differences in changes in job status among the three types of placements. Further analysis showed that persons in individual placements experienced more positive job separations than persons in group placements (3.17, $P \leq .10$) or mobile crews (37.36, $P \leq .0001$) In addition, employees in group placements experienced more positive changes in job status than persons in mobile crews (22.53, $P \leq .0001$).

Type of job. Results of our one-way chi-square analysis indicated that changes in job status were more likely to occur for persons in janitorial/maintenance positions or food service positions than persons employed in light industrial jobs.

Job tenure. The results of a one-way chi-square analysis indicated no significant differences in changes in job status for persons who were employed one to six months versus those employed for seven months or longer.

Discussion

The results of our investigation of why persons with disabilities separate from their jobs extend the existing literature in several important ways. Further, our analysis of positive reasons for job separations is unique to the literature. This investigation suggests that health- and economic-related reasons contribute to more job separations among persons with moderate, severe, or profound mental retardation and psychiatric disabilities; lack of job responsibility and social-vocational behavior were reasons reported most often for persons with mild mental retardation. Although previous investigations have analyzed reasons for job separation (Hanley-Maxwell, 1989; Hanley-Maxwell et al., 1986), only Hill et al. (1986) differentiated reasons in relation to disability. To date the present investigation is the only study of why persons with psychiatric disabilities separate from their jobs in supported employment.

Recently, group placements have been criticized by Brown, Udarvi-Solner, Long, Davis, Ahlgren, VanDeventer, and Jorgensen (in press) for a number of reasons, including the possibility that persons with disabilities may not possess the opportunities to interact with nondisabled co-workers and they may be stigmatized by their co-workers and supervisors and consequently not be provided with opportunities to enhance their employment status. The results of the current investigation suggest that persons with disabilities do not separate more often in relation to whether they are employed individually, in clusters, or as a member of a work crew. However, results suggest that persons with mild mental retardation who are individually placed separate from their jobs to find better paying jobs or to move to new geographic locations and work.

Supported employees separated from light-industrial jobs for production, health, and economy reasons. Production-related reasons also related to employee separations from food service and janitorial-maintenance jobs. Ford, Dineen, and Hall (1985) reported that food service workers appeared to separate from their jobs for production reasons.

Several studies have reported that social-related and production-related reasons contribute to job separations (cf. Lagomarcino, 1990). This investigation suggests that supported employees are more likely to separate from their jobs for production-related and economic factors within six months of placement. Beyond the six-month period, social-related reasons seem to account for more separations (i.e., lack of responsibility and social vocational behavior). Interestingly, Hanley-Maxwell (1989) reported no relation between length of job tenure and reasons for job terminations. However, she did note that 38% of all terminations resulted from poor social behavior and an additional 36% were associated with reasons that included poor social behavior. As noted by Hanley-Maxwell (1989) and the current investigation, social problems that persist over time likely will contribute to reasons given for terminations and separations. Regardless of disability level, type of placement, and type of job, it may be that individuals who are terminated within the initial days or weeks of placement may be terminated because they cannot get the job done, whereas if a person lacks social competence, he or she may lose a job after several weeks or months of placement.

Two additional findings are worthy of discussion. In this investigation we found that persons with mild mental retardation separated significantly more than did persons with all other disabilities in the sample. Although length of job tenure and placement model were not significant factors, a significant job-type relationship was found to exist. Specifically, janitors, maintenance personnel, and food services workers with mild mental retardation separated more often than did employees with other disabilities in these jobs. These results are not surprising; youth and minority groups have been found to enter the job market through any one of the job types studied, especially janitorial/maintenance and food services positions (Wool, 1976). Young adults with mid mental retardation appear to utilize the placement and job training services supported employment provide (cf. Trach, 1990).

At least two questions seem worthy of future study as a result of these job separation findings. First, it seems that persons with mild mental retardation are separating from their jobs at rates higher than almost all other disability groups we studied, with the exception of employees with psychiatric disabilities and moderate-severe-profound mental retardation (for health and economic reasons). Preliminary findings of our ongoing benefit-cost analyses of supported employment suggest that costs associated with persons with mild mental retardation are significantly higher than the benefits accrued (McCaughrin, Conley, Rusch, & Tines, 1990). The initial high cost of placement and training is reduced when an employee remains employed for at least nine months or longer. Our research suggests that costs associated with follow-up support services are less than those associated with placement job training. Similar findings have been reported by Kregel, Wehman, Revell, and Hill (1990).

Second, health-related job separation was found to be significant among persons with psychiatric disabilities and moderate-severe-profound mental retardation. Future research must begin to explore which methods must be considered to retain the employment of these disability populations. These methods, in turn, must then become the focus of personnel preparation programs that are focused upon teaching employment and transition specialists (cf. Renzaglia & Everson, 1990; Winking, Trach, Rusch, & Tines, 1989).

In summary, this investigation found that level of disability, type of job, and length of employment all contributed to reasons given for the job separations of supported employees. Additionally, persons with mild disabilities separated from their jobs for positive reasons, typically finding a better paying job or relocating to a different part of the country. These positive separations, however, may contribute to lower benefit-cost ratios being realized by statewide supported employment demonstrations.

Note

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